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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [PINR](#) [AF](#) [NO](#)

SUBJECT: PM COMMITTED TO AFGHANISTAN, FOCUSED ON HIGH NORTH

Classified By: Ambassador Ben Whitney, reason 1.4 b and d.

1. (C) During the Ambassador's introductory call on Prime Minister Stoltenberg on February 14, the Prime Minister made sure that we knew that Norway remains committed to supporting ISAF and will not be deterred by the recent attack on the Norwegian provincial reconstruction team in Meymaneh. The Prime Minister said that the response of Allies in support of the Norwegian forces, both with Dutch F-16s and U.S. A-10s from OEF, was much appreciated and demonstrated that the Alliance works well together and that we need one another. Stoltenberg added that the use of F-16s in defense of Norwegian forces proved their value and will help him counter those in the far-left Socialist Left party (SV) who oppose the Norwegian deployment.

2. (C) The Ambassador thanked Stoltenberg for his steadfast commitment and said that we look forward to having Norway follow through on its commitment to provide even more support for ISAF. The Prime Minister hedged a bit noting that the details for Norway's additional contribution to ISAF still have to be worked out as Norway is also looking to deploy military personnel in support of a UN mission in Sudan, commenting that "we have limited resources."

High North: Energy Development Will Go Forward

3. (C) Stoltenberg then turned to the High North, which is a top priority for his government. He spent some time talking about his determination to continue oil and gas development in the Barents. While recognizing that some in SV (a minority coalition partner) oppose it, the PM said development will go forward -- "the question is when and how." Stoltenberg said there really are no political obstacles for proceeding with energy development in the Barents but rather his concern was that companies need commercial finds. To date only two fields, Snoehvit and Goliath, have proven to be commercially viable out of 70 exploration wells. But, with the high price of oil, it is expected that companies will continue to explore as more areas are opened up. The Prime Minister noted that as Norway builds up its liquified natural gas infrastructure, it will become a bigger player on energy security since Norwegian gas supply can then be transported, not just where the pipelines take you.

PM: "Vaccines are my baby"

4. (U) As he was wrapping up the meeting the Prime Minister exclaimed: "and you should know vaccines are my baby." Stoltenberg went on to praise President Bush for the support and funding the United States has provided during his administration for vaccines. The Prime Minister described his involvement with the Global Alliance VI (GAVI) and stressed that this was a personal priority.

Comment

5. (C) The Ambassador and Prime Minister hit it off well, talking initially about their kids (similar ages) and their interest in sports (skiing, biking). Stoltenberg, who clearly is not comfortable talking about foreign policy, was much more at ease talking about Norwegian medals in at the Torino Olympics. In his first few months in office it has become evident that Stoltenberg prefers to leave foreign policy to his extremely able Foreign Minister - Jonas Stoere.

That said, the Prime Minister welcomed the Ambassador's pitch that we will continue to look for ways for Norway and the United States to work together around the world to promote common objectives, as we are doing in Sri Lanka, Sudan, Afghanistan, and the Balkans. Also, if disagreements arise, the Prime Minister agreed that it was best to consult closely to see if the differences can be overcome, and if not, to simply agree to disagree quietly.

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WHITNEY

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